Wilson Bull., 114(2), 2002, pp. 282–285

Ornithological Literature

Edited by Sara R. Morris

BEHAVIORAL ECOLOGY OF TROPICAL BIRDS. By B. J. M. Stutchbury and E. S. Morton. Academic Press, New York. 2001: 165 + ix pages, 31 black-and-white figures. $69.95 (cloth), $39.95 (paper).—The authors' intent in writing this book was to demonstrate the differences between tropical birds and those that reside in or migrate to temperate zones to breed, especially to ornithologists and behavioral ecologists steeped in the lore of Temperate Zone dogma. They postulate that too many of the underlying assumptions of the developing field of behavioral ecology are based on temperate models. Do tropically breeding birds differ from their temperate counterparts? They do in many ways. The authors use these differences to examine and test several general hypotheses in behavioral ecology. The answers they propose often not only provide explanations for the evolution of behavioral and morphological traits found in tropical species, but also offer plausible and testable explanations for temperate breeding species. A recurring theme throughout the book is that "empirical data and field experiments are severely needed" to distinguish between hypotheses that are valid only for temperate species and those that are general. For example, extrapair fertilizations appear to be common in Nearctic monogamous passerines but extremely rare in Neotropical monogamous passerines. Because of the longer breeding season and greater asynchrony among females in the tropics, there would be more opportunities for extrapair copulations in tropical species. What are we missing?

The authors pose this book as a "call to arms" for behavioral ecologists to investigate tropical species to generate models that are more general and less limited by constraints of the Temperate Zone before it is too late; many of these species occupy habitats that are being degraded rapidly by human activity. The effects of the loss of large tracts of habitat are obvious: the physical structures needed by the birds for survival are removed. Less obvious are the effects of selective logging (often posed as an alternative to clear-cutting) and the establishment of a road or even a trail. Some species, such as the Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock (*Lepidothrix serena*), the White-throated Manakin (*Corapipo gutturalis*), and the White-fronted Manakin (*L. serena*), require the intermix of sun and shade that produces sunflecks for their courtship arenas. These birds display with their bodies partly in full sun and partly in the shade. Removal of single trees from the wrong locations would open up the sites to full sun and eliminate breeding from the areas.

Although short, only 130 pages of text, the book raises many thought-provoking questions. I highly recommend it for anyone interested in tropical ornithology or behavioral ecology. For those interested only in Temperate Zone patterns of behavioral ecology, it should be mandatory reading. The book is well written and as easy to read by those not versed in the jargon of the field as it is by researchers of behavioral ecology.—ROBERT C. BEASON.

BIRDS OF THE TEXAS PANHANDLE. By Kenneth D. Seyffert, illustrated by Carolyn Stallwitz. Texas A&M Univ. Press, College Station, Texas. 2001: 501 pp., 10 black-and-white illustrations, 1 map, species checklist by county. $49.95 (cloth), $24.95 (paper).—Although at first the geographic coverage of this book might seem limited, the author extends his coverage to include the adjacent counties of New Mexico and Oklahoma. Thus, the resulting area is larger than some states, with elevations extending to almost 1,500 m. Along with the elevational variation are variations in habitat that have resulted in 442 species reported for the region and 151 confirmed breeding species. In the introduction, the author gives an overview of the region and describes the more important birding locations in some detail, indicating which species can be found in each location.